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RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 0690  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 000230

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DEPT FOR SCA/CEN (PERRY)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/16/2017

TAGS: [ENRG](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: BERDIMUHAMMEDOV APPOINTS TOP OIL/GAS DEPUTY  
CHAIRMAN

REF: A. ASHGABAT 226

[1](#)B. ASHGABAT 221

[1](#)C. 06 ASHGABAT 162

ASHGABAT 00000230 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i. Jennifer L. Brush for reasons 1.  
4 (B) and (D).

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (SBU) The first, mild surprise in the formation of Turkmenistan,s new government is a positive one: the appointment of Tachberdy Tagiyev as Deputy Chairman with the oil/gas portfolio of the Council of the Cabinet of Ministers. Another February 22 personnel decision from Berdimuhammedov quietly eased out a media figure particularly identified with Niyazov. A third sent an ex-Minister for Sport and Tourism to Kyiv as ambassador. END SUMMARY.

New Oil/Gas Deputy Chair Floats to the Top

[1](#)2. (SBU) The February 22 presidential decree appointing Tagiyev to his new rank simultaneously removed him from the chairmanship of the &TurkmenGas8 state company, to which he had been named just four days previously. Replacing him there by separate decree is Yagshygeldy Kakayev, a lifelong hydrocarbon-sector technician who since 1996 has headed the industrial refining division of the Ministry of Oil, Gas and Mineral Resources.

[1](#)3. (SBU) The fifty-year-old Tagiyev is a top professional specialist with very broad technical background and also the repete of a good manager. To judge from his curriculum vitae, he is more personally experienced in oil than in gas. The last year of his career trajectory under Niyazov appeared erratic. Having been Turkmenistan,s Oil and Gas Minister

from 2002-2003, he was named Hakim (governor) of Balkan welayat (in which capacity he met with DCM in January 2006 (Reftel), one of at least three substantive embassy contacts with him to date), but in February 2006 was removed from that position and put in charge of the Turkmenbashi refinery, in what was tentatively guessed to be a half-step down for unknown reasons.

14. (C) His elevation now makes Tagiyev just the second Deputy Chairman selected by President Berdimuhammedov, after Foreign Minister Meredov. The obvious puzzle is why he was initially named, just four days ago, to a post which he has now left for the Deputy Chairmanship. One guess is that another person was initially projected for the Deputy Chairmanship, but fell through. In that context, Post recalls speculation last month by the usually well-sourced Turkish ambassador that internationally respected former Oil and Gas Minister Gurbanmyradov had been released from jail and was being groomed for an official return to Turkmenistan's brand-new government. Whether or not that notion ever had any basis, the Turk has since then told us that Gurbanmyradov has been hospitalized due to unspecified grave health problems. Tagiyev's appointment also tracks with the government's invitation for South Central Asia's Principal Assistant Security Steven Mann to visit. Foreign Minister Meredov had told Charge on February 7 that the government would be "ready" to discuss energy issues with PDAS Mann by the beginning of March, and noted that there would be a new cabinet.

#### Unrelated New Appointments

15. (SBU) Burdimuhammedov's other personnel decrees announced in February 23 media included:

ASHGABAT 00000230 002.2 OF 002

-- appointment of Baymyrat Gulov as Turkmenizderyayollary (Marine Transport) Directorate Chief. Nothing was mentioned concerning the fate of Gurbannazar Ashyrov, who had been (re)appointed to the same position two days earlier;

-- (re)appointment of Magtymguly Akmyradov as Nature Protection Minister;

-- (re)appointment of Dowlet Hojayevev as Main State Tax Service Chairman;

-- (re)appointment of Gurbanguly Aytgulyev as Turkmendokun (fertilizers) State Joint Stock Company Chairman;

-- appointment of Arslan Nepesov as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Ukraine. Nepesov is a former Sport and Tourism Minister who was fired by Niyazov in mid-2006 and has reportedly been sitting at home ever since. He has no known background in energy or other spheres of direct importance in Ukraine/Turkmenistan relations. This was Berdimuhammedov's first decree naming an ambassador. Conceivably it was related to after-effects of the imbroglio concerning Turkmenistan oppositionists, appearance in Kyiv late December, though our most recent contact with the Ukrainian Embassy in Ashgabat gave no hint of any lingering diplomatic fallout from that affair;

-- dismissal of Myrat Orazov from the Directorship of Turkmenistan Television and of the TV-4 Channel & in connection with transfer to different work." Orazov is a TV producer chiefly known for having produced a biographical film of demised-president Niyazov's father.

-- appointment of Nazarguly Shagulyeva as National Committee for HydroMeteorology Director;

-- appointment of Gurbangeldy Gylychdurdiyev as Turkmenistan State Power Engineering Institute Rector.

COMMENT

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16. (C) The government may have felt it incumbent to fill the Oil and Gas Deputy Chairmanship vacancy at this time specifically to furnish an authoritative figure for meetings with PDAS Steve Mann during the latter,s visit to Ashgabat next week, given that Meredov himself was the first to suggest to Charge last month that Mann come, and that the scheduled visit has been regularly brought up in the Ashgabat meetings of visiting EUR/ACE Coordinator Adams and A/S Boucher. End Comment.

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